



Madison County Mobile Testing Makes Free COVID-19 Testing Accessible

by Megan Wieser
July 29 2020 8:30 AM



EDWARDSVILLE – As confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Madison County mount to more than 1,800 with up to 75 new cases per day, accessibility to testing is essential to ensure the health and safety of the area. To meet that critical need, institutional collaborators are partnering to bring free testing to various communities twice weekly via Madison County Mobile Testing.

Outreach program team members include Southern Illinois University School of Medicine's (SIU SOM) M. Rebecca Hoffman, MD, coordinator Erica Austin and fourth-year medical student Tatiana Kelley; the SIUE School of Nursing's (SON) Valerie Griffin, DNP, and Melissa Bogle, DNP, Family Nurse Practitioner DNP students Tyler Tanzyus, Brooke Buffington and Julie Milton; and Director of Public Health Toni Corona and staff from the Madison County Health Department. Lewis and Clark Community College is providing use of its mobile unit.

"This is important to our communities, because there are many individuals who are interested in being tested, but lack the ability to travel to a designated site," explained Hoffman, program director of the SIU Alton Family Medicine Residency and director of Research and Scholarly Activity at SIU SOM. "In addition, many sites require registration and an appointment ahead of time. We are setting up in areas where a large number of people may have access to our services without needing transportation."

At the unit, testing is available at no cost for adults and children, ages six months and older. Anterior nasal swabs are performed by a healthcare provider from the SIUE SON or SIU SOM. This involves a cotton swab that is inserted just inside each nostril for five to 10 seconds. According to Hoffman, this is different from the deep test that goes through the nose into the throat.

Tests are bagged and transported directly to the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) the same day. Report time depends on the IDPH lab, but generally take 5-7 days. Results are delivered via phone by the Madison County Health Department.

"We started this effort with Madison County Housing Authority sites with high perceived need and low access to testing," Hoffman said. "We have now branched out into other areas and have tested more than 1500 individuals around the county in the communities of Granite City, Venice, Madison, Fairmont, Collinsville, Glen Carbon and Alhambra."

"This is a wonderful interdisciplinary and multi-institutional collaboration that meets the needs of our communities by providing education and service," said Griffin. "Additionally, this experience allows our students clinical time in underserved and rural health regions, as well as training in COVID-19 education."

Daily updates on COVID-19 cases and contact tracing data, along with a location posting for Madison County Mobile Testing is available at www.co.madison.il.us/departments/health.

The mission of SIU School of Medicine is to optimize the health of the people of central and southern Illinois through education, patient care, research and service to the community. SIU Medicine, the health care practice of the school of medicine, includes clinics and offices with more than 300 providers caring for patients throughout the region.

The SIUE School of Nursing's programs are committed to creating excellence in nursing leadership through innovative teaching, evidence-based practice, quality research, patient advocacy and community service. Enrolling more than 1,700 students in its baccalaureate, master's and doctoral programs, the School develops leaders in pursuit of shaping the nursing profession and impacting the health care environment. SIUE's undergraduate nursing programs on the Edwardsville campus and the regional campus in Carbondale help to solve the region's shortage of baccalaureate-prepared nurses and enhance the quality of nursing practice within all patient service venues. The School's graduate programs prepare nurses for advanced roles in clinical practice, administration and education.

Photos: SIUE's Melisa Bogle, DNP, performs an anterior nasal swap on a community member during a Madison County Mobile Testing site visit.